

Heat Safety Tips

To reduce the potential for heat-related illnesses, follow these prevention tips:

- Drink more fluids, regardless of your activity level. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. (Warning: If your doctor generally limits the amount of fluid you drink or has you on water pills, ask how much you should drink while the weather is hot)
- Don't drink liquids that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar; these actually cause you to lose more body fluid. Also, avoid very cold drinks, because they can cause stomach cramps.
- Stay indoors and, if at all possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air conditioning, go to the shopping mall or public library. Even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat.
- Electric fans may provide comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90s, fans will not prevent heat-related illness. Taking a cool shower or bath, or moving to an air-conditioned place is a much better way to cool off.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- NEVER leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle.
- Although any one at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk than others. Check regularly on infants and young children, people aged 65 or older, people who have a mental illness, and those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure.

If you must be out in the heat, try the following:

- Limit your outdoor activity to morning and evening hours.
- Cut down on exercise. If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, nonalcoholic fluids each hour. A sports beverage can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat, however, if you are on a low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage.
- Try to rest often in shady areas.
- Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat (also keeps you cooler) and sunglasses and by putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher (the most effective products say "broad spectrum" or "UVA/UVB protection" on their labels).

If you experience signs of heat stress such as dizziness, rapid heartbeat, diarrhea, nausea, cramps, throbbing headache, dry skin (no sweating), chest pain, great weakness, mental changes, breathing problems, or vomiting, contact your health care provider immediately.